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Festival hits on hard times; support lags

By LOUISE OKRUTSKY

As promoters of the Farmington Founders' Festival each year boast of a bigger and better event, they may be unconsciously sentencing the annual affair to oblivion.

Behind the growing festival stands the specter of skyrocketing costs as inflation takes a larger bite from the event's budget. Increased costs aren't accompanied by a steady flow of donations from residents and merchants, according to several persons associated with the event, presently or in the past.

While the festival will continue to take place in Farmington within the coming years, promoters predict that the event will eventually shrivel to a smaller size or dissipate altogether.

At present, the festival seems to be running on its own momentum. "People will make it happen," said past chairman of the festival Terry Sever. "They set a date and the festival happens."

After the next five years, rising costs stand more than a fair chance of halting that momentum, according to promoters.

WITHOUT A DIFFERENT method of financing the events, the festival might succumb to rising costs, said Chamber of Commerce director Ed Lane, who is the festival's administrator.

"Without new funding, after five years, the festival might be reduced in size, or be gone," he said. "Some people are suggesting that we stop putting it on for a year then come back with it in a fresher form."

Festival costs are met through donations from area businessmen. But the donations are uneven with a few businesses making generous gifts and others refusing all appeals.

Some businesses can be counted on to donate \$500 each year. But such generosity can't be expected to continue, says festival chairman Gary Marimonti.

"You can't keep hitting people like that. Recession will cause people to start pulling in the purse strings. At that point, you can drop the festival or find a sponsor for each group in the parade."

"The festival might fade away or a professional group might pick it up. "We're amateurs in the fundraising aspect. I was talking to a man who worked for an advertising agency and he told me we ask for too much money from too few."

INSTEAD, promoters agree, it would be fairer to collect \$10 from each of the 1,000 businesses in the area. That would give the committee \$10,000 to cover an event budgeted at \$17,100 this year.

In the 15 years Farmington has presented the festival, promoters have tried several methods of raising money. First, merchants agreed to pay 10 percent of their festival earnings towards the collective bill. But some were reluctant to pay. In 1972, matters came to a head when the festival committee turned up a deficit of \$1,900.

"It was a bad scene that year," said then chairman John Ogurek, now of West Bloomfield.

The Chamber of Commerce eventually covered the debt. But at a Chamber breakfast, Ogurek felt compelled to tell the members what he thought of their behavior.

"I did a naive and useless thing," he said. "I told them they were cheapskates. I told them what I was thinking."

Each chairman before him was given a silver spike commemorating his contribution to the city's festival. In 1972, the chairman didn't receive a spike.

But that didn't solve the financial problem, which continues to recur.

"Without new funding, after five years, the festival might be reduced in size or be gone. Some people are suggesting that we stop putting it on for a year, then come back with it in a fresher form."

— Ed Lane,
— Chamber of Commerce

THE FESTIVAL COMMITTEE is working with a \$1,800 deficit. They plan to eradicate that, according to Marimonti, with this year's earnings. But they will incur a \$1,500 deficit of their own.

"Each year the festival is bigger and better. The money remains the same, but they want a bigger festival," he said.

Raising money for the festival now employs statesmanship as well as salesmanship. Businessmen don't react well to hard sell tactics. This year, Marimonti intentionally is sending out the appeal letters late to avoid the appearance of harassing merchants for money.

"If you start in April and May, they're so badgered that they don't give any money. This is for the community and everyone benefits. We're not going to pressure business."

Last year, the committee received sufficient pledges but were faced in fall with bills to pay and not enough money to wipe out those debts. Reminder notices were sent out to delinquent pledges.

With such unpredictable financing, the budgeting of the festival presents some special problems.

THIS YEAR'S BUDGET of \$17,100 is an increase over last year's \$14,700. The 1979 festival committee is estimating that among its earnings will be about \$3,400 in booth fees and \$6,000 in actual donations.

This year shows \$13,000 in donations, but that figure takes into account non-cash contributions. The pageant will almost pay for its own cost of \$4,000. The Miss Farmington Scholarship Pageant will take in \$3,900 and leave a deficit of \$1,000. Even so, this year's committee is considering raising the price of pageant tickets.

But after the pageant, the festival committee begins to spend money instead of earning it. The booths earn money for their occupants, not the festival.

Over the years, the cost of the festival has risen. The most costly event is the parade, which this year has its own \$4,500 budget. That's a \$500 increase over last year's expenses.

Marching bands and drill teams seen in the parade charge the festival committee a fee to cover their travel expenses. This year, the Shriners are committed to walking in the parade.

If the entire body of the Shriners' marching band appears, the committee will donate about \$1,000 to the Shriners' Hospital.

In addition, the First Michigan Colonial Fire and Drum Corp., a calliope, the Birmingham Pipe and Drum Corp., and the Diplomats Drill Team from Detroit will make paid appearances in the parade scheduled for July 28.

THE FIREWORKS DISPLAY on the Oakland Community College grounds cost \$800 in 1975. In 1976, the cost was \$900. Two years ago, the fireworks bill amounted to \$1,500. This year, it will take \$2,500 to put on that display. About 75 percent of the bill is paid by

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Making new friends

Maureen Bryant of the Farmington Hills Police Department's Juvenile Division shares a laugh with Stella Murphy (right) over 13 hand puppets Mrs. Mur-

phy made for the department. The felt and fur friends will be used to teach elementary students different aspects of safety. (Staff photo by Harry Mauthe)

Concrete haulers' strike slows down construction

By MARY GNIEWEK

A six-week-old trade strike by concrete haulers has slowed and in some cases altogether stopped new home and building construction in the Farmington area.

Work is at a standstill at two new Farmington Hills subdivisions: Ramblewood on Fourteen Mile between Drake and Halsted, and Farmington Square at Nine Mile and Halsted.

"The builders are not anxious to begin new projects because of the backlog," said Judy Downey, spokeswoman for Impact Marketing, the Southfield managing firm for the two Farmington developments.

Of eight homes slated for construction in Ramblewood, enough cement to pour foundations was available for just three houses, Ms. Downey said.

"We were getting about 20 percent our normal supply from outside the area, but even that was cut off Friday," she said.

Work also was halted on five model homes in Farmington Square.

Farmington Hills Building Director Dick Miller said the strike has slowed all new construction and will result in higher prices for cement. One builder said prices may jump from \$1 per square foot to \$1.15 or \$1.25.

A fire station under construction on Drake Rd. north of Twelve Mile is in a holding pattern because of the strike.

"Fortunately, we had concrete floors poured before the strike," said senior fire inspector Robert Johnson. "But the stairways and outside walks are not poured. The heavy fire equipment will need concrete paving."

Johnson said the building is slated for a mid-August completion.

SQME 800 CEMENT truck drivers, mechanics and bin operators, members of Teamsters Local 247, voted down a tentative contract last week. Talks between company and union officials have not resumed yet.

Local president George Kirchner said the strike affects Wayne, Macomb and south Oakland County. Monroe and Washtenaw counties are also at a standstill.

In addition to the strike, a June 1 pay raise for carpenters, roofers, and related tradesmen will add to new construction costs.

"We always hold to the quoted price on new contracts," said Manny Nosni, a builder in the Ramblewood Subdivision.

"But without additional starts, we will be forced to shut down. Work will come to a complete stop. Then the prices will rise for new homebuyers."

Olum pictures were painted by other builders.

"We're in trouble," said Harry Nosanchuk, a builder at Knox Con-

struction in Farmington Hills. "Without question, the strike is going to push up costs that will be passed on to the consumer."

"The strike is holding up the beginning of every new job, since we can't proceed without poured foundations."

NOSANCHUK, WHO builds homes in the \$160,000 range, said the strike could interfere with construction well into next year.

"We usually start now and finish before the weather gets bad in late fall. I have no idea when this will end. We may suffer repercussions into next year."

"I feel sorry for the consumer. Interest rates are going up. Mortgage rates are coming in over 11 percent. This could cost the new homebuyer thousands of extra dollars."

Jack Lezotte, builder and co-manager at Ager Construction in Farmington Hills, predicts that if the strike ends in two or three weeks, work will be backlogged for months.

"We have already lost five full weeks of the best weather," he said. "We're missing a whole season of homebuying."

The strike has put an estimated 12,000 skilled laborers — plumbers, electricians, carpenters and others — out of work temporarily in the metropolitan area.

Top issue is money for FEA

By MARY GNIEWEK

Cost of living allowance and a 6 percent pay hike top the list of benefits the Farmington Education Association (FEA), which represents the district's 770 public school teachers, hopes to accomplish in its next contract agreement.

The negotiating team will meet with school administrators Wednesday and again next week to discuss the contract, which expires Aug. 25. All kindergarten through 12th grade teachers, including special education instructors and counselors, belong to the union.

FEA president Tom Chrzanoski, an English teacher at Power Junior High and a member of the bargaining team, said he is confident this year's contract can be solved without a strike in September.

"The relationship between the Board, the administration and the union has been excellent," Chrzanoski said. "We've had years of labor peace, and we hope to maintain that relationship."

"The number one priority is money. Teachers are feeling the crunch of inflation. Seventy-five percent of the membership responded to a survey saying money was the major concern."

New teachers with bachelor's degrees are hired at \$11,016 and reach a top salary of \$19,743 after 11 years. Master's degrees bring novice teachers \$12,163 and \$23,000 after 11 years experience.

"We'd like to improve each step by 6 percent. Cost of living varies with the rate of inflation," he said.

THE BARGAINING TEAM will be led by Zan Alley. Other members of the team are chairman Dick Curp, a junior high teacher, Jim Miner, a school psychologist, and Sue Haun, a teacher at Marillac Hall.

Another major issue will be reduction in class size based on types of students.

"Different types of students would be given different numerical values," Chrzanoski explained. "A disabled or handicapped student would have a value higher than one. So if class size was 20 and there were some handicapped students in the classroom, there may be only 25 bodies in the classroom."

Another issue is preferential hiring — the hiring of teachers from other districts who are laid off and belong to Region 7 Oakland County Coordinated Bargaining Committee.

"This would force the district to hire teachers laid off in other districts before hiring new teachers," Chrzanoski said. "For example, Novl belongs to Region 7. Say they hire back all their teachers on recall. If they had this clause, they'd have to hire laid off teachers in Region 7 before hiring from outside."

The Farmington school district is one of 26 that belong to the Region 7 committee. They share common goals of equalizing salaries and benefits county-wide and gaining strength by uniting forces. The region has a common expiration date in August 1979.

"AS WE GO toward regional bargaining, one contract for several districts is the goal — one master contract," Chrzanoski said.

A regional bargaining committee will review Farmington's tentative agreement and make a recommendation. Approval or disapproval is up to a vote of the teachers in the district.

"With regional contracts, there is a move away from local autonomy. But there are still provisions for settlement of local concerns," Chrzanoski said.

Improved health and dental coverage are also concerns of the union.

Red Cross needs blood

The Red Cross Bloodmobile will be stationed at the Farmington Hills Baptist Church, 28301 Middlebelt, Farmington, from 3-9 p.m. Friday, June 22. For an appointment, call 851-0310 during blood drive hours.

Donors must be between the ages of 18 (17 with parental permission) and 65 and in good health. Red Cross asks for an hour of your time to donate a pint of blood.



A new fire station under construction on Drake Road north of Twelve Mile is sporting the unfinished look, thanks to a strike by concrete haulers. A Farmington Hills fire inspector said the station won't be operational until driveways and some inside concrete work is completed. (Staff photo by Harry Mauthe)

inside

REVIVING THE FESTIVAL

While many folks around town are wondering just what is going to happen to the Farmington Founders' Festival in future years, Farmington editor Steve Barnaby has some comments to make. To see what he has to say, turn to Page 7A.

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